

# **Judith P. Hoyer Program**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is a Judy Center?**

Judith P. Hoyer Early Child Care and Family Education Centers or "Judy Centers," provide access to early childhood education and family support programs located at or near Title I schools. Typically, education opportunities and support services are available 7-12 hours a day, year round. Judy Centers serve children birth through Kindergarten and their families in an effort to increase the number of children entering school ready to learn. They are unique because they promote school readiness through collaboration with community-based agencies, organizations and businesses. Most services or assistance a family may need can be provided directly or arranged by the Judy Center onsite or nearby, including health care, Adult Education, identification of special needs and early intervention, child care, parenting classes, and family literacy.

### **Who is Judy?**

Judy Centers are named after the late Judith P. Hoyer, an early childhood advocate and Supervisor of Early Childhood Education for Prince George's County, Maryland Public Schools. In 1993, with the opening of the Early Childhood and Family Learning Center in Adelphi, Maryland, Mrs. Hoyer brought to life an innovative vision for housing educational and other community services in one building. This unique approach provided collaboration among specialists in various programs to better serve children and their families. After her death in 1997, "Judy Centers" began opening across the state with state grant funds provided by the Maryland State Department of Education to carry out her legacy. Thousands of young children and their families are benefiting from Mrs. Hoyer's expertise and foresight. Today, the programs and activities offered through the Judy Centers reflect her vision of how professionals must collaborate to integrate a wide spectrum of early childhood education programs and family support services for children age birth through kindergarten. Judy Centers were written into Maryland law in May 2000 (Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §5-215) and are important components of the act entitled, "Judith P. Hoyer Early Child Care and Education Enhancement Program."

### **How can Judy Centers help prepare children for school?**

Judy Center programs foster young children's physical, social, linguistic and cognitive abilities – skills that help children become accomplished learners and students. An important requirement of Judy Centers is that all early childhood education programs must meet national or state standards of high quality. Also, all early childhood staff participates in extensive staff development activities. Ensuring children have healthy minds and bodies, increasing parenting skills, providing parents opportunities to be involved in their children's education, and increasing parents' own educational level helps children be better prepared for school.

### **Readiness for school includes:**

- Being socially adjusted, emotionally aware, and able to communicate with adults and other children.
- Having an awareness of print and letter-sound relationships and understanding a story.

- Understanding basic math ideas, patterns, shapes and how to put things in a certain order.
- Having awareness of animal and plant life, and people's roles in the family and the community.
- Being comfortable with individual creativity and an appreciation for self-expression through the arts.

### **What makes a Judy Center special?**

Judy Centers are special because they offer so many different services under one roof. This integrated services approach is unique because children and their families can visit a single location to receive educational programs, family support, health-related services, and family involvement activities. This is made possible through the close collaboration of community agencies, organizations and businesses that ensure the provision of effective and efficient service delivery, as well as sponsorship of family activities.

### **How do the community partners collaborate and work together?**

Each Judy Center has a formalized partnership with local agencies, organizations and businesses in their community. The partnership meets on a regular basis to discuss the activities and needs of Judy Center families. They discuss the impact of service delivery on school readiness and, using school readiness data, jointly determine goals, objectives, milestones and strategies to employ to increase the number of children entering school ready to learn.

Each Judy Center staff person is trained to know and understand the available services that can be delivered by the agencies, organizations and businesses in their community. Judy Center staff persons connect families to the appropriate community partners when needs are identified. They also follow the families' progress and ensure they are receiving and responding to the services. Some examples are:

- A non-English speaking child is enrolled in one of the Judy Center's early childhood education programs and a Judy Center staff person discovers that the parent is interested in learning English. The Judy Center staff person will arrange for the parent to be enrolled in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) class with Adult Education that may be offered onsite at the Judy Center or nearby.
- A child has difficulty getting along with other children in the classroom, is disruptive and uncooperative. The teacher will contact Judy Center staff who may arrange for a behavior specialist to interview the parent and teacher, to observe the child, and then develop a positive behavior plan for the parent and teacher to follow. The specialist will follow up and make adjustments to the plan as necessary until the behavior changes or, if it does not, refer the family for mental health counseling.
- A Judy Center staff person is observing in a classroom and notices a child has broken and chipped teeth that have turned dark. The staff person contacts a member of the Judy Center partnership to get the child a dental screening and appropriate follow up care by a professional.

### **What services do Judy Centers offer?**

Through collaborative partnerships with community agencies, organizations and businesses, Judy Center services are comprehensive with strong links to schools and community programs.

Judy Centers must:

- Include Prekindergarten, Kindergarten and Preschool special education
- Collaborate with the local Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program
- Partner with child care providers to ensure the availability of before and after school programs

Judy Centers must also integrate into their activities at least five of the following community partners:

- Head Start
- Family Support Centers
- Healthy Families
- Public libraries
- Child Care Resource Centers
- Early childhood programs associated with colleges or universities
- Other home visiting, community health, and family support services partners

Judy Centers are monitored on a regular basis and are required to meet the following 12 Component Standards:

- Full Day/Full Year Programming
- Provision of Breakfast/Lunch
- Service Coordination and Family Support
- Integration of Early Education Services
- Family Involvement
- Early Identification/Intervention
- Inclusion of Young Children with Disabilities
- Health Services
- Professional Development
- Adult Education/Family Literacy
- Accreditation/Validation of Programs
- Judy Center Partnership/Leadership

Click [here](#) for a description of the 12 Component Standards.

### **Why are Judy Centers important?**

Research confirms that high quality care and education are critical to a child's future school success. A child's early experiences set the stage for future learning. Judy Centers work with all the prior environments children may be in before entering school, including Head Start, child care, nursery schools, and children at home with a parent or other relative. If all caregivers are knowledgeable of child development and engage in appropriate activities with young children, the children will be better prepared for school.

Working with children birth to 3 years of age also allows Judy Centers to identify children with developmental delays or other special needs. This is extremely important because early intervention can give a child and his family the services and support necessary to ensure that by the time the child enters school, they can develop to his or her potential.

### **What is an accredited Judy Center?**

All early childhood education programs that are part of a Judy Center must be validated or accredited by state or national accrediting bodies. Programs within the public school system such as Prekindergarten and Kindergarten are already part of an accredited school; therefore, those programs undergo a validation process. Early education programs such as

Head Start, child care centers or family child care providers that are separate from the school system undergo an accreditation process.

A high quality program has the following characteristics:

- A friendly, open environment where family members are always welcome to observe, participate or volunteer to help in activities.
- Teachers who provide a nurturing, safe, and cognitively stimulating environment.
- A staff to child ratio that meets state standards.
- Program staff with formal educational backgrounds and solid work experience in early childhood education.
- Ongoing professional development that provides continuing education for staff.
- A program evaluation process that welcomes parental input.
- Formal parent/teacher conferences where children's progress is discussed.
- A research-based curriculum that has clear goals, is age-appropriate, and takes into account the needs of individual children.

### **Who benefits from the Judy Center approach to improving children's readiness for school?**

- **Children** benefit because the learning environments are positive, exciting, and age-appropriate. They are exposed to the seven domains of learning— personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts and physical development and health – in high quality environments. Children with disabilities or special needs are provided with interventions that may ensure greater school success.
- **Parents** of young children benefit because their children are enrolled in stimulating programs that reflect the best practices of early childhood. There are many opportunities to become more involved in their child's education, increase their parenting skills and their own educational level, and participate in rich family-oriented activities that help them become better parents.
- **Local school systems** benefit because children enter school better prepared educationally and socially. Parents are more involved and, through early intervention, many times developmental delays and speech issues have been remedied before children enter the primary grades. This has social, as well as financial benefits.
- **The state** benefits from the improved quality of life for families with young children living in Maryland.

### **Where are Judy Centers located?**

Judy Centers are located in the following jurisdictions in Maryland: Allegany County, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, Baltimore City, Calvert County, Caroline County, Carroll County, Cecil County, Charles County, Dorchester County, Frederick County, Garrett County, Howard County, Kent County, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Queen Anne's County, St. Mary's County, Talbot County, Washington County, Wicomico County, and Worcester County. Baltimore City, Charles County, and Montgomery County each have two Judy Centers. The Judy Centers currently serve approximately 12,000 young children who live in 39 elementary school zones.

Click [here](#) for a current list of Judy Center locations and contact information.